

(ಶ್ರೀ ಎ. ಜಿ. ರಾಮಚಂದ್ರರಾವ್.)
ಎಂಬುದನ್ನು ಆಲೋಚಿಸಿ ತೀರ್ಮಾನಿಸುತ್ತೇವೆಂದು
ಹೇಳುತ್ತೇನೆ.

Question No. 80 re: Breaches in Sangenahalli and Tuppadahalli Tanks.

* Sri J. MOHAMED IMAM (Jagalur).— Sir, as I speak on this subject I feel as if I am celebrating the first anniversary of the breaches of Sangenahalli and Tuppadahalli Tanks though with a heavy heart because it is exactly two days short of one year since this major disaster occurred. Till now I did not take much part or pursue the matter hoping that the Government would take necessary effective action in this matter. These tanks were sanctioned in the year 1944; the execution commenced from 1946. Necessary facilities were created to speed up the works. I may just state that a sub-division was constituted for each tank and the Assistant Engineer in charge of each sub-division was given the assistance of a number of overseers. To add to the speedy and proper execution of the work a separate division was created solely for these two tanks. His main and sole work was to look after the execution of these works in a proper way. The work went on what I call at a snail's pace for nearly 8 years and last year we thought that the people round about, who had waited fortunately for a long time, would reap the benefit of these two tanks. But unfortunately, these two tanks burst or breached simultaneously and thus dashed off all the hopes entertained by the people round about.

When these two tanks breached there was widespread commotion throughout the State. Both the public and the Press took up the cause. And it was felt that the breaches of these two tanks were not quite natural or entirely due to rains to which they were attributed but mostly due to the gross negligence of the departmental people who were in charge of them. The Government appointed a Committee with Sri L. Siddappa as the Chairman

and a Superintending Engineer and a District Board President as members. They visited the two spots, examined both the breaches thoroughly and effectively and have given their findings and I will read relevant portions of their report. I will be very brief. I may mention that this tank breached on 28th October 1953. I may point out that this tank was quite ready to receive full storage of water. The work was supposed to have been completed. There was heavy rainfall and this tank began to receive water. But even before the tank was full, it developed a breach and the bund gave way and all the water flowed out. The finding of the Committee on this is as follows :—

“Inadequate foundation and keying the bund well into the ground;

Imperfect consolidation and want of picking the newly rolled surface to get a thorough mix of bund material to a uniform homogeneous consistency;

Poor and porous soil with which the bund filling material is made;

Want of water-proof consolidated gravel backing to revetment to afford it support and poor quality construction with rounded boulder stones without keying the face stone to the back; and

Quick rise of water level in the new lake.”

I may state that there was not only a breach but the rivetment failed. This was a major disaster and the Committee in their finding have said that a breach of this tank which was not even full, was due to not too much of rainfall but inadequate foundation, imperfect consolidation, want of water-proof consolidated gravel backing, poor quality revetment work, etc. Thus the bund was not erected properly and there was a good deal of negligence on the part of the officers.

Now I come to the question of breach of Tuppadahalli Tank. It reveals a very interesting phase, which is not at all complimentary to

our engineers. It is common practice that the level of the waste weir through which the surplus water flows out, will not be constructed unless the bund has raised to the required height and unless also the revetment is complete. But in this case the reverse method seems to have been followed. Even before the bund was complete, even before it was raised to the required height and even before the revetment was complete somehow, the Engineer thought it fit to construct the waste weir to the full level and when it was constructed the tank was ready to receive full storage of water. This was an unfortunate circumstance. So, when the tank received the full supply of water, it began to discharge, the margin left between the top level of water and the bund having hardly one foot and again in this case also the revetment was not at all completed. So the water came into direct contact with the poor soil with the result that it acted on the soil which was not well consolidated. Let me read the findings of the Committee on this question also.

5-30 P.M.

Report of Enquiry Committee.—

“P-13: This sudden filling of the lake added to the poor black soil construction with which the whole bund was constructed, incomplete work of revetment in many grades, and most important of all the construction of the masonry weir to full designed height even before the bund was raised to full height and the designed free board secured, etc., are the causes for this tank breaching.”

This is a very unfortunate thing. Any Engineer would have first constructed the bund and then he would have thought of raising the waste-weir in order to effect full storage. But here it was very unfortunate that the waste-weir was raised to the designed height while the revetment work was still incomplete. This is most unengineering. One thing has to be said, Sir, that the

Engineers responsible for this work have throughout been very grossly negligent. Sir, Sangenahalli Tank breached on 28/10. On the same day information was received that Tuppadahalli Tank was full and it had been overflowing from the waste-weir. On that day, namely, 28/10 when Sangenahalli Tank breached, it was the duty of the Executive Engineer to be forewarned and rush to Tuppadahalli to take adequate and necessary precautionary measures. In fact, I too went there; after seeing Sangenahalli Tank, I rushed to Tuppadahalli. I was there on 29th morning. The entire tank was full. It was discharging. Practically the bund revetment had collapsed and in many places there was no revetment. The local Assistant Engineer was there trying to do something with the date and palm trees that were available. But no responsible engineer was there. The Executive Engineer who is solely meant for this work was not there. He had seen the breach of the Sangenahalli tank and this is hardly 20 miles. He never took the trouble to rush to Tuppadahalli to take necessary steps. Even on the 29th he had not gone there. On the 30th also he had not gone there. He comes there for the first time after the breach and after the disaster has happened. Why I am pressing this point is, to say that there was every chance of saving the Tuppadahalli tank and there was every possibility. Supposing on the 28th alone if the Executive Engineer had rushed to the spot and seen the tank and how it had been discharging from the top level, if he had ripped open the waste-weir, much of the water would have drained out. There was time for that. It is simply criminal on his part not to have visited the spot on that particular day. I do not hold only the Executive Engineer responsible. The Chief Engineer received telegrams and the Superintending Engineer received telegram. Nobody went there. It was only a small Assistant Engineer who was there but he had no authority to take any decisive action. He said, well, Sir, I cannot take the responsibility. I was of course feeling

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within myself. But still the Executive Engineer who was so near did not care to come in time. I asked him afterwards; he said, 'I was expecting the Chief Engineer', as if the breach would wait for the Chief Engineer! I feel that they have not taken immediate action, and I am confident that if timely action had been taken and if the Executive Engineer was more vigilant, at least Tuppadahalli could have been saved. I know, Sir, once in the year 1943 there was heavy rainfall—in one night seven inches. The Jagalur Tank was overflowing. The Executive Engineer Sri Thippiah rushed to the spot immediately. He got the voddars and nearly half the water was drained out and the tank was saved. It is a most colossal mistake that has been committed by the Engineers—when the tank was breached, none of the Engineers in authority either the Superintending Engineer or the Chief Engineer or even the Executive Engineer rushed to the spot, and a major disaster was allowed to take place. If only any of the persons in authority were there in time, I feel very much that this tank would have been saved and the gross negligence shown by the Engineering Department can never be excused, or condoned. All the Engineers were there after 30th when the tank had breached. Sir, I do not want to narrate all these facts and hold a *post mortem* examination. This is most unsatisfactory. The attitude of the engineers particularly regarding Thuppadahalli can never be excused. Sir, even otherwise, when two new tanks are constructed and when they are expected to receive water, it is the duty, it is the practice of the engineers to be very vigilant and try to be at the spot to avert any such calamities. The breach has occurred during day time and the tank was filling for the first time and it was the duty of the engineers to be present on the spot and see how the new tank behaved. No officer worth the name was present at Sangenahalli when that tank breached and there was an interval of two or three days before the second tank breached. It is

nothing but criminal negligence on the part of the engineers concerned not to have gone there and taken appropriate steps.

In this connection, Sir, I must invite attention to the very fine minutes entered in the note of Sri H. R. Guruv Reddy and Sri L. Siddappa:

"It is clear from the conclusions reached by us that in the case of both the tanks the work from start to finish has not been done according to specifications. This leads us to an inference that the Engineer Officers who were entrusted with the task of executing these two important new works, have, either, as is alleged by the residents of some of the villages surrounding Sangenahalli Tank, been corrupt and have allowed higher rates for manifestly inferior work with a view to share the profits or they have been grossly negligent in their duties, thus causing great loss to the State Exchequer."

"Whether the Engineer Officers allowed this bad work out of corrupt motives or due to indifference or negligence in the discharge of their duties, we are of the opinion they are equally guilty and they should not be allowed to go unpunished. We leave it to the Government to cause such further enquiry as they deem fit to apportion the guilt . . ."

Sir, the staff employed had ample time to do their work. It was never expected to rush through their work. They were given the best of materials. Ample provision was made for consolidation. They were given adequate equipment and machinery and with all this, if this is the result, I do not know whom to trust. One thing can be said: from the beginning to the end there has been indifference and criminal negligence.

Sir, I was associated with this Department. It is with a heavy heart that I am saying this. I feel it very much and I am greatly distressed to observe that these two projects have

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ended in disaster mainly on account of negligence and carelessness of the officers concerned. It is my duty at this time to suggest to Government that we should take steps to improve the morale of the Department because it is well-known that our Public Works Department has lost a good deal of its former morale. I am not saying this without foundation. I have heard a lot of complaint recently from the villagers. I personally believe they are all quite correct though I cannot correct them. I have heard that cart-loads of cement were sold. I cannot prove this at this distance of time. I have heard collusions among officers and other leakage in the system of work being carried on. It is also true that on account of the delay caused in the course of the execution of these projects, they had to revise the estimates and this revision has mounted up the cost of the work by two or three times. The work has dragged on for nearly ten years and no wonder the cost has mounted up. This is something that is not complimentary. Even after a good deal of time is spent if this is the result, the Department is only worth scrapping. I would even go a step further and say that at this rate this Department of Public Works may be scrapped altogether and the works entrusted to villagers and raiyats in the villages who can do better work. They have also good experience of putting bunds.

Now Sir, I do not hold only these officers responsible. Those officers on the spot did not do their duty. Then, Sir, what about those officers who were entrusted with the work of supervision? On the spot there will be the Executive Engineer and the Assistant Engineers. To supervise over them, there is the Superintending Engineer and the Chief Engineer. Did they go there and inspect the work, I ask. Did they go into the accounts and see whether it has been carried out correctly? Sir, the mode of supervision at present is, they get up this side of the bund and get down the other side and go away. Did the supervising officers stay there for a day or two and go into the details of the work, examine the work that was being

carried on? Sir, the supervising officers must be held responsible. If they had exercised due vigilance, they could have found out the defects. The Committee has pointed out that the gravel was poor. That is because, there is a lot of difference between the present way of supervision and the old way of supervision. Sir, a list has been given of the officers who were in charge of the work and the period they were in charge; Sri Srinivasa Murthy was there for two years and three months, Sri Hutchveeriah for two months, Sri K. Seshadri Iyengar for about a year, Sri Ramaswamy Iyengar for about two years. Sri S. Krishnappa was an officer who never went to the spot. He says, he was waiting for the Chief Engineer. Are not these people responsible? If Government are convinced that they are responsible, it is their duty to take immediate action. The finding of the Committee is also there.

Regarding Tuppadahalli tank also some officers are responsible. Sir, these Executive Engineers are the persons who will be our future Chief Engineers. Woe be to us if the entire matter of the State is entrusted to them. I do not know what will happen. The persons who were associated with this work, I must say, do not know the rudimentary and the elementary principles of engineering because breach of Tuppadahalli tank is definitely due to their negligence. If they had first finished the bund and then left the water, this would not have occurred. When they knew full well that heavy rains were threatening, when they knew the wastage discharge, none of them went there but sat pleasantly at home. Sir, in the interest of the Department Government should see that the morale of the Department improves.

As you know, Sir, in Chitaldrug District there are only 300 tanks. These two tanks would have helped many people materially. Four thousand acres would have been brought under cultivation. Unfortunately, it is delayed for another two or three years. I want the Government to take keen interest in such works and post only

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very experienced Executive Engineers who will remain on the spot. Let us gain experience by mistakes. Chitaldrug District has not rainfall and so, tanks are the only source for irrigation. If these tanks are restored early, it would be a boon to the people. Government should please see that they are completed soon.

Regarding compensation I want to say a word.

Mr. SPEAKER.—The scope of the discussions is only about the breach of the tanks and the action taken.

Sri J. MOHAMED IMAM.—It is stated in the report, Sir; it is the consequence of the breach. So, Sir, it is but right and equitable that these people who have suffered must be given reasonable compensation for all this. It is the duty of the Government to take such action as they deem fit in the interest of efficiency and in the interest of fair name of the Engineers themselves who have built up a reputation of their own.

*Sri Kadidal MANJAPPA (Minister for Revenue and Public Works).—Mr. Speaker, Sir, I can understand the feelings of my Hon'ble friend Sri Imam. He was mainly responsible for sanctioning these two tanks. The people of that area considered these two tanks as a boon to them. Their hopes were shattered on account of the unfortunate breaches that occurred last year. Government constituted the Committee very early after the breaches occurred, i.e., in November 1953. The Committee sent up its report in the fourth week of January 1954. Government considered the report of the Committee and passed their orders on 5th March 1954. The Committee in its report came to the conclusion that in addition to the heavy rainfall bad works were mainly responsible for the breaches. Government adopted the findings of the Committee and asked the Chief Engineer to take action

according to the report of the Committee.

The Committee has proposed certain remedial measures. The suggestions regarding the remedial measures were examined by the Standing Technical Advisory Committee which consists of the present Chief Engineer and the retired Engineers. They thought that they could not fully agree with the recommendations of the Committee in regard to the suggestion in respect of remedial measures. The Technical Committee also visited the two tanks and they have given their opinion regarding the further steps to be taken in the matter of breach. My Hon'ble friend was also present at the time when the Committee visited the place. Necessary steps have been taken to fill up the breaches and the work is in progress. I can assure my friends that Government are very anxious to post competent men and to see that the tanks are repaired very early.

Sri J. MOHAMED IMAM.—Before the next rainy season, they must be over.

Sri Kadidal MANJAPPA.—As regards disciplinary action to be taken against the officers who were responsible for the bad work, I may submit to the House that the Chief Engineer was requested to fix the responsibility and he has called for the explanations of the officers concerned and on account of that there is some delay in fixing the responsibility. Without calling for the explanations of the concerned officers, it is not correct or proper to punish them. Therefore he had to call for the explanations from all the concerned officers.

A MEMBER.—Some of them may have retired.

Sri Kadidal MANJAPPA.—The work has dragged on for nearly 8 years. In the case of Tuppadahalli Tank the work was started in the year 1943. In the case of Sangenahalli Tank the work was started in 1945. There were several officers who were in charge of the

works and therefore explanations had to be called for. The matter is being considered by the Chief Engineer. I had phoned to him only yesterday to send up his proposals very early. I may assure my friend that we will take needful action in the matter.

A MEMBER.—He may be kept under suspension.

Mr. SPEAKER.—The House will now rise for the day and meet tomorrow at 8-30 morning.

The House adjourned for the day at Fifty-five Minutes past Five of the Clock to meet again at Thirty Minutes past Eight of the Clock on Saturday the 23rd October 1954.
